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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

6 March 1956

DOCUMENT NO. 25

NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐

[ ] DECLASSIFIED

CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S (C)

NEXT REVIEW DATE: 1990

AUTH: HR 70-2

DATE: 14 MARCH 80 REVIEWER: 018557

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STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 20-56

SUBJECT: Points Made by Mr. Robert Bowie, Director,  
Policy Planning Staff, Department of State,  
During NIE Survey

1. Odds. Mr. Bowie questioned the value of attempting to reach precision on the chances for or against a given development's occurring. He pointed out that when the odds were fairly close one way or the other, the policymaker had to plan for both possibilities.

2. Policy Considerations. In line with the above, Mr. Bowie felt that NIE's would be more useful to the policymaker if they explored in greater detail the consequences of varying courses of US action. He also suggested the possibility of indicating in the NIE's those features in a situation which are susceptible to influence by positive US action as distinguished from those which the US was powerless to influence.

3. Evidence. Mr. Bowie felt that the most important single improvement in NIE's would be the development of some means of telling the reader to what extent judgments or estimates were based on firm evidence or on "feel."

4. Presentation. Mr. Bowie suggested that NIE's should have three sections: (a) conclusions, similar to the present ones but more in the nature of a summary of the paper; (b) text, shorter than the present text and in direct support of the conclusions; and (c) annexes, extensions in depth of the most important subjects discussed in the text.

5. NIE News Bulletin. Mr. Bowie expressed interest in receiving, periodically, a bulletin which would inform him of NIE's recently published or about to be published, briefly describe their scope and applicability to current policy problems, and indicate the relationship between the various NIE's.

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